

1. Introduction:

Name, Title, Facility

2. Description of Polk C I:

Polk Correctional Institution is a Major Correctional Institution located in Polk County Florida. It was constructed in 1976 and houses approx. 1200 adult male inmates.

The facility has several missions: First & foremost it's a re-entry center; in fact it's the largest re-entry center in the state. We also have PRIDE industries, a substance abuse program, & a faith & character dorm. The majority of inmates have 3 yrs. or less to serve on their sentences; and they're returning to 1 of the 3 surrounding counties: Polk, Hillsborough, & Pinellas.

Polk C I's Main Unit is also the parent facility of 4 satellite facilities: Polk Work Camp, Largo Road Prison, St. Petersburg Work Release Center, & The Transition House in Bartow for a total of approx. 1797 inmates between the 5 facilities. Polk's Main Unit & Work Camp sit on approximately 49 acres of land collectively.

3. **Physical Facility Needs, Associated Costs, & Challenges:**

a. Ongoing Physical Plant Issues:

- i. As previously mentioned, the facility is 43 yrs. old, & through daily use; wear & tear, & abuse, things constantly break & need repaired or replaced. In previous years, we haven't had enough funds to repair or replace many of the items, such as leaking roofs; which has exacerbated the problems & results in higher costs for repairs.
- ii. Need additional security cameras throughout the facility; both inside & outside the compound.
- iii. Very limited space for programs; E.g., at Polk's Main Unit we have a Multi-purpose building (10,000 sq. ft), and it's currently off-line due to roof damage & 3 broken A/C units. It could be used for additional programs & events, but it's been sitting vacant for approx.. 4 yrs. due to no funding for the repairs.

b. Regarding funds to maintain our facilities: One of the ongoing problems we have... not enough money appropriated for our Maintenance Dept. budget to properly maintain our facilities; which is a huge safety concern.

- i. In fiscal yr 17/18 we were originally budgeted 96K; however, we later received additional funds for a total of 121K for 3 facilities; however, we spent 159K. Largo's Maint. Budget is separate; in 17/18 we spent approx. 18K.

4. Needs & Challenges in Programming:

- a. 1 Academic Teacher position for 1200 inmates; & the position has been vacant for approx. 7 mos. due to the teacher being off for medical reasons several mos., & then resigning.
- b. The Academic Teacher position requires a Master's Degree, & the beginning salary is \$32,600; which is equivalent to \$15.67 per hour. The position also requires additional certifications & CEU's annually, which is the teacher's responsibility to pay out-of-pocket. Our Education Dept. is currently shut down.
- c. One of the local school districts: Orange County Public Schools avg. teacher's salary is approx.. 48K, compared to our agency at \$32,600K.
- d. Considering the fact we're the largest re-entry center in the state, we need more teachers to adequately serve 1200 inmates; not to mention programming reduces inmate idleness & increases their employment opportunities.
- e. We also have 3 Vocational courses: Plumbing, Computer Technology, & Marine Technology; however, 2 of the positions have been vacant for several months. We're having difficulty filling them due to the low beginning salary not being competitive with the same positions in the local community.

5. Recruiting & Retaining Correctional Officers:

Just like my colleagues & co-workers, we're facing many of the same challenges as other facilities regarding vacancies; turnover rates, etc...

- a. Many of these issues are tied to short-staffing. We don't have enough security staff to adequately monitor 1200 inmates. Security staff are outnumbered by inmates & the inmates know it.
- b. There's also the dangerous of the job & contraband issues
- c. Retirements & staff leaving to work for other companies & agencies that pay more money.

And, that's a big obstacle to hiring & retaining staff:

- d. Competition with other local companies & agencies such as the Sheriff's Dept, Amazon; Walmart & Publix Distribution Centers, Disney, etc...
- e. Polk Sheriff's Deputy (certified)... 46,300K with 2K sign-on bonus; compared to our agency... \$30,180K for Cadets in the Academy, & \$33,488K for Certified Correctional Officers.
- f. Another obstacle, we can only hire individuals who are 19 yrs. of age & older, & we'd like to change that policy to 18yrs.

Closing:

In closing, I want to address 2 things:

First, I want say how proud I am of our staff. They're very dedicated & hard-working people, who do an outstanding job every day under very difficult circumstances; & I want to recognize them for their service. I'd also like to invite all of you to visit our facility & meet our staff in person.

Lastly, regarding budgetary issues, Polk Correctional Center is ripe for reform, & increasing Education & Staffing levels is an important part of that. This is a pay me know or pay me later issue. If we don't address the issues now by investing money on the front end, then we're going to pay for it on the back end; which is likely to result in increased recidivism & it's related costs.